

HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE TELLS DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR THAT TRINITY RIVER PROPOSAL FALLS SHORT

Sacramento, California -- "After a three-hour meeting here Tuesday the Hoopa Valley Tribe told Department of Interior (DOI) Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Bennett W. Raley that the DOI settlement proposal for litigation on the Trinity River was, "disappointing and falls far short of the science that exists in the Trinity River Record of Decision (ROD) signed by Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt in 2000." Raley met with Hoopa Tribal Chairman Clifford Lyle Marshall and other council members in an effort to renew settlement talks about Trinity River litigation.

The Hoopa Valley Tribe and the department are litigants against agricultural and energy water users (Westlands Water District and the Northern California Power Agency) who sued in 2000 to block Trinity River restoration.

"The DOI settlement strategy is flawed because it lacks supportable science, violates trust and environmental laws, and will only lead to more litigation," said Marshall. "The best way to begin restoration of the Trinity River is through legislation, but Mr. Raley did not say the DOI would join the tribe's legislative efforts."

"The (ROD) signed in 2000 was the result of 20 years of cooperative studies by the department and numerous state and federal agencies along with our tribe. It remains the best available science for the restoration of the Trinity River." Marshall said the DOI proposal is a reactive approach that would spill water into the river when fish are in danger. "The department is calling this adaptive management with rapid response teams, but it is not a real plan for rehabilitation of the river. It is a plan for putting out political brushfires like the 34,000 fish that died in 2002. The Trinity River needs a proactive plan for real long-term restoration of the fishery, not a two-page 'alternative'". Interior's plan also calls for the purchase of water for fisheries restoration (The federal Bureau of Reclamation estimates that purchase of up to 70,000 acre feet of water would cost \$5-7 million), something that will be nearly impossible given current federal appropriations, said Marshall.

Marshall said, "I sat at the meeting in complete shock as the proposal was presented. It was the same proposal that Westlands had presented. The same proposal that was dismissed as scientifically unsupportable by every federal agency within the Department of Interior that deals with salmon restoration."

Since 1964 the Bureau of Reclamation has diverted most of the river's water, in some years up to 90%, to the Central Valley Project for agricultural and energy uses. Because fish populations in the river were devastated by dams and low stream flows, Congress began studying how to restore the river in the 1980's. The ROD allows 53% of the river's water to be exported, while leaving 47% in the river for fishery rehabilitation.

"The Hoopa Valley Tribe is no more willing to compromise the health of the Trinity River than it's willing to compromise the health of its children," said Marshall. "It is unfortunate that BOR still doesn't understand that."